GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2470
ANSWERED ON:15.12.2004
NEW ENTRY ROUTES WITH PAKISTAN
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has discussed the matter regarding opening of new entry routes with Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether the government has also assessed its likely impact on the internal security of the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the routes identified therefor alongwith the outcome of the discussion held with Pakistan; and

(e) the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) to (e) With a view to promoting people to people contact, and enhance trade and transit between the two countries, Government have, after due consideration of all aspects, including the security aspect, made proposals to Pakistan for opening up of new routes, including rail/ road link between Munnabao (Rajasthan) and Khokrapar (Sindh), a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, opening up of Jammu and Sialkot route, and opening of Attari-Wagah land route for trade and transit.

Technical level discussions to start a bus service between Munnabao and Khokhrapar were held in Islamabad on March 9 − 10, 2004. Both sides agreed to meet again to continue discussions. During Foreign Secretary level talks in June 2004, Pakistan suggested that it would be easier for them to start a rail link between these places. A technical level meeting between the railway authorities was held at Islamabad on December 2-3 to discuss the issue. During the meeting, India indicated its readiness to start the rail service between Munnabao and Khokhrapar by October 2005. However, Pakistan has so far not accepted this timeframe. In the Joint Statement issued on December 3, 2004, after the meeting, both sides agreed to an early establishment of the proposed link. It was also agreed by the two sides to take necessary steps in the interim, to undertake specific activities including laying of railway tracks and other related infrastructure, to operationalise the rail link.

The first meeting between India and Pakistan on all issues related to the commencement of the proposed bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad was held on December 7 − 8, 2004. Both sides reiterated their commitment towards an early establishment of the proposed link, and exchanged ideas on all aspects related to its operationalisation. It was agreed to continue discussions at the next meeting to be held at mutually agreed dates. Differences continue to exist, including on the issue of documents to be used for travel on this route.

Technical level discussions on opening of the Jammu-Sialkot route have not been agreed upon so far. Pakistan has so far not responded positively to the proposal for opening of Attari-Wagah land route for trade and transit.